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Public Opinion on the Third Term City Charter Amendment

April, 2000



University of New Orleans Survey Research Center

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This survey presents the opportunity to examine whether opinions have shifted in support for the third term charter change over the last year. It represents voters' opinions on a controversial issue that has received an increased amount of media attention.

When compared with voters' opinions in 1999, the results demonstrate that **support for the charter change has declined**. A closer look shows that this decline in support was **primarily due to a shift in blacks' opinions**. It seems that greater exposure to the issue leads to greater opposition.

The third term charter change still remains a racially divisive issue. Only 16% of whites favor the charter change, while 46% of blacks favor the change.

TABLE 1

As you may know, the mayor of New Orleans is currently limited to two terms in office. As things stand today, would you favor or oppose changing the city charter so that the mayor would be limited to three terms.

	All		Black		White	
	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Favor 3 rd Term	41%	35%	55%	46%	17%	16%
Oppose 3 rd Term	54%	60%	41%	49%	79%	81%

DK	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	3%
(N)	(479)	(425)	(291)	(265)	(171)	(145)

Hindering support for the charter change is voters' support for the principle of term limits. Consistent with the trend across the country, voters in New Orleans are overwhelmingly in support of limiting the number of terms an elected official can serve in office. Support for the principle of term limits has increased in the last year, particularly among whites.

The publicity about the possibility of a charter change campaign has probably activated voters' predispositions favoring term limits.

Opinion on the third term and approval of the Mayor are inextricably tied. These two attitudes influence each other, and the activation of opposition to the charter change in the last year has contributed to a 11% decline in mayoral approval.

TABLE 2

Do you favor or oppose putting limits on the number of terms an elected official can serve in office?

	All		Black		White	
	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Favor Term Limits	66%	70%	60%	63%	76%	83%
Oppose Term Limits	24%	22%	30%	28%	14%	13%
DK	10%	8%	10%	9%	10%	4%
(N)	(479)	(425)	(291)	(265)	(171)	(145)

TABLE 3

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job Mayor Marc Morial is doing?
Is that strongly or not very strongly?

	All		Black		White	
	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Strongly Approve	35%	27%	48%	36%	12%	11%
Approve	40%	37%	35%	34%	46%	41%
Disapprove	9%	14%	6%	12%	16%	19%
Strongly Disapprove	9%	16%	5%	13%	17%	21%
DK	7%	6%	6%	4%	10%	8%
(N)	(479)	(425)	(291)	(265)	(170)	(145)

Analysis of Black Voter Opinion on Third Term Charter Change

We are focusing our analysis on black voters because whites are overwhelmingly opposed to the third term charter change. Among black voters, **females are much more likely to favor the charter change than are males**. The results demonstrate that there is a "gender gap" on the issue of the charter change with females being 21% more favorable (55% vs. 34%).

When compared to opinion on the charter change in 1999, the results indicate that the decrease in support is primarily due to a shift in support among black males. Black males are 16% less favorable toward a charter change than they were in 1999.

While there is no obvious explanation for this gender gap, it may be that black males are simply more suspicious of Marc Morial's extending his term in office, and therefore his power, because they are more distrusting of politicians in general. Also, some black males are associated with rival political camps who have their own mayoral candidates in mind. These rival campaigns have become more active in the past year.

<p>TABLE 4</p> <p><i>Charter Change by Gender</i></p>	<u>(Blacks Only)</u>	Females		Males	
		<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
	Favor	58%	55%	50%	34%
	Oppose	37%	41%	46%	60%
	DK	5%	4%	4%	6%
	<u>(N)</u>	<u>(166)</u>	<u>(160)</u>	<u>(125)</u>	<u>(105)</u>

Approval of the Mayor has declined slightly more among black males than black females. In the last year, approval of the Mayor has dropped 16% among black males as compared to 11% among black females.

<p>TABLE 5</p> <p><i>Approval By Gender</i></p>	<u>(Blacks Only)</u>	Females		Males	
		<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
	Strongly Approve	50%	36%	46%	37%
	Approve	35%	38%	36%	29%
	Disapprove	5%	11%	6%	12%
	Strongly Disapprove	3%	11%	6%	16%
	DK	7%	4%	6%	6%
	<u>(N)</u>	<u>(165)</u>	<u>(159)</u>	<u>(125)</u>	<u>(105)</u>

Support for the charter change among blacks has declined across all education levels.

TABLE 6

Charter Change by Education

	Less Than High School		High School		Some College		College Degree	
<u>(Blacks Only)</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Favor	64%	44%	64%	53%	52%	45%	47%	44%
Oppose	26%	46%	32%	41%	48%	54%	46%	52%
DK	10%	10%	4%	6%	1%	1%	6%	4%
<u>(N)</u>	<u>(36)</u>	<u>(39)</u>	<u>(73)</u>	<u>(68)</u>	<u>(93)</u>	<u>(84)</u>	<u>(86)</u>	<u>(75)</u>

In summary, amending the city charter to allow the Mayor to run for a third term will prove to be a difficult endeavor, and it is becoming more difficult with time. Public support for the charter change has declined among both blacks and whites over the last year. Among blacks, the most notable change has occurred among males. For black males, it seems a decline in support for the third term is producing less mayoral approval. As a whole, it seems that the increasingly positive outlook on the quality of life in Orleans Parish (see 2000 Quality of Life Report) has not translated into support for changing the charter to allow the Mayor to run for a third term.

SAMPLE INFORMATION

Dates of Interviewing:	March 17 –	April 4, 2000
Racial Distribution:	White 37%	Black 63%
Gender Distribution:	Female 58%	Male 42%
N=425	Sampling error	+/- 4.8%